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RESEARCH TO BENEFIT CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

BURNABY – The Province is providing $2.25 million for research that will lead to better treatments for children affected by disabilities such as Down syndrome, autism, and dyslexia and other illnesses, Advanced Education Minister Murray Coell announced today.

World-renowned neuroscientist Dr. Urs Ribary has been appointed as the B.C. Leadership Chair in Cognitive Neuroscience in Early Childhood Health and Development at Simon Fraser University. Ribary is a leading researcher in magnetoencephalography (MEG) and its application for brain diagnosis and treatment. MEG uses a state-of-the-art brain imaging scanner that measures magnetic fields from the brain. Ribary will use the new SFU-Down Syndrome Research Foundation MEG Facility, the only one in Western Canada, to gather data that will lead to a better understanding of the normal and altered human brain.

"This government has an ongoing commitment to build the best system of support in Canada for children with special needs and persons with disabilities," said Coell. "Dr. Ribary's research will not only help children everywhere but it will also contribute to the growing body of innovative research taking place in our province."

The B.C. Leadership Chair in Cognitive Neuroscience in Early Childhood Health and Development will provide a research network that will encompass numerous institutions at the provincial, national, and international level. The principal aim of this network is to develop a research program and brain imaging infrastructure that will place British Columbia at the leading edge in this discipline. This co-operative approach is vital because different brain imaging techniques provide complementary information and are essential to study the brain's underlying structure and function.

"I am very honoured to accept this B.C. Leadership Chair and I want to thank the government of British Columbia, personally and on behalf of many children with brain abnormalities and illnesses, for providing this enormous opportunity to better understand the developing human brain in health and disease," said Ribary.

Funding for B.C. Leadership Chairs was established with an initial provincial commitment of $45 million for the Province's Leading Edge Endowment Fund. Twenty leadership chairs will each receive a total endowment of up to $4.5 million, which is cost-shared between the government and the private sector. This is the province's eighth B.C. Leadership Chair. Twelve more B.C. Leadership Chairs will be announced by the end of 2008.

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